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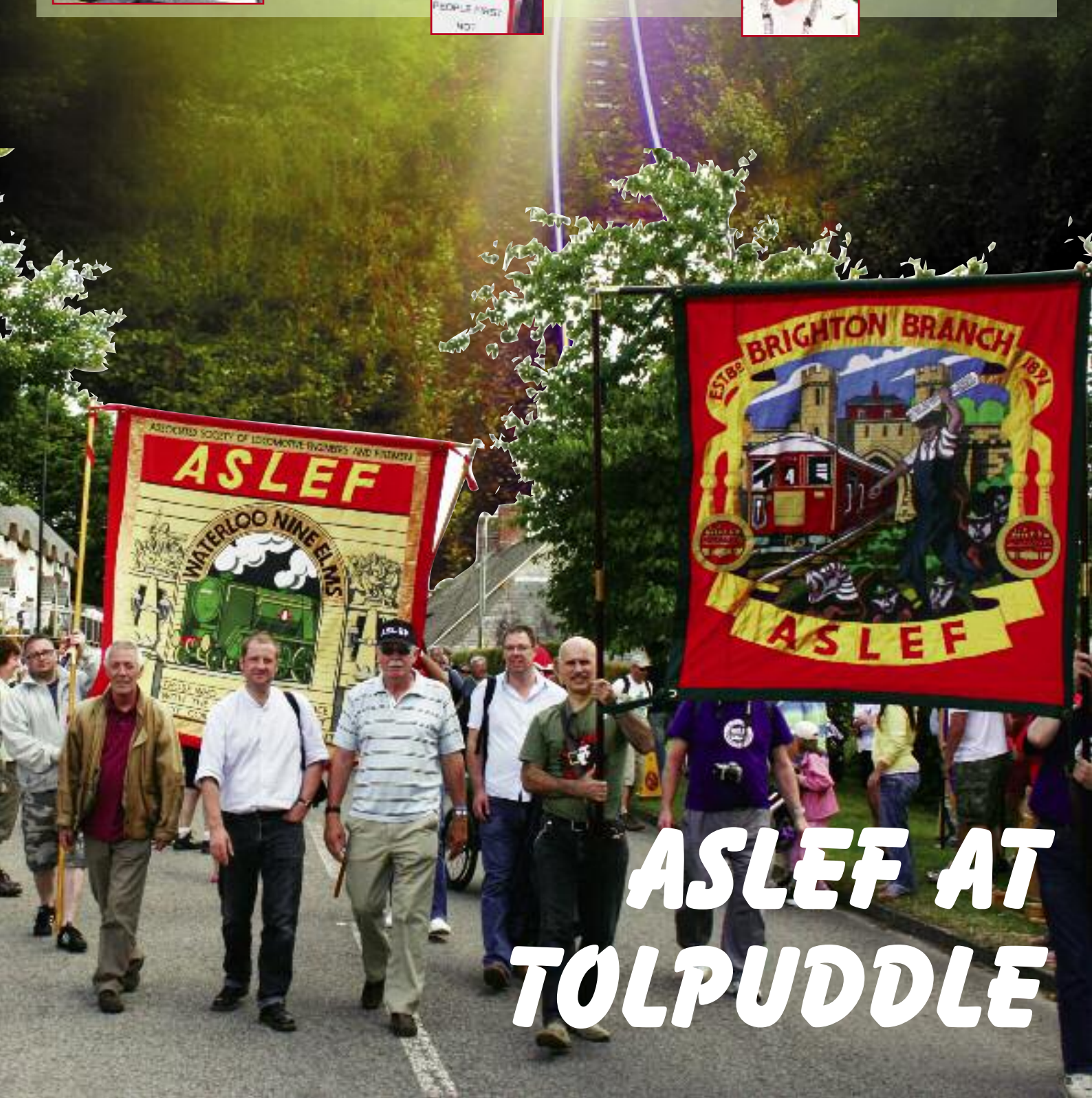
**KEEP ONE
FRANCHISE
PUBLIC
SAYS UNION**



**POEMS AND
PROTESTS –
WHEN ASLEF
MET FOSBR**



**CAKE
DECORATION'S
LOSS IS LUL'S
GAIN!**



WANTED

DEPOT INTRODUCERS

Railway Enginemen's Assurance Society was established in 1865 and our policies provide life and disablement cover* for our members and saving plans for their families, with contributions collected through the paybill deduction facility.

The Society is looking to expand its Depot Introducer network and has a number of opportunities throughout the country. Our current Depot Introducers, most of whom are drivers, are based in over 50 locations and we are looking to expand our team.

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If you are interested to find out if there is an opportunity at your location please contact our General Manager, Victoria Herbert, on Freephone 0800 328 9140

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NEWS ■■■■■■



ASLEF celebrates trade union martyrs in Dorset ■ Proud to be ASLEF **4**

Union trials company websites ■ ROSCO enquiry criticises franchising **5**

Meeting our Waterloo ■ Jamieson backs not for profit franchise **7**

FEATURES ■■■■■■

Keep one franchise public says union **8**

Electrification ticks along **9**

Exeter train survived Luftwaffe strike **11**



Poems, protests and partners – when ASLEF met FOSBR **12**

Chattanooga Choo Choo **22**

REGULARS ■■■■■■



16 Key Worker: From Wingham via Wigan to Wimbledon!

17 Keeping track

14-15 Branch news

18 Obituaries

19-21 Letters to the editor

23 Prize Crossword ■ Legal services for members

POLITICAL MONEY FUNDS MORE THAN LABOUR



WE'VE had quite a few members recently contacting the union to withdraw from contributing to ASLEF's political fund. Personally, I think the political levy is well worth the money – especially as no member pays more than £6.84 a year to support it. It's the price of a couple of pints.

But I equally accept that if you don't want something, paying anything for it is extortionate. I also recognise that every member has the right to withdraw – and I'm very well aware of how much ASLEF members value their independence. But that doesn't stop me urging members to contribute to the fund.

As a Labour man, it saddens me that many drivers said they want to withdraw because they think the government has lost its way (at least, that's the polite version!). It's painful because I understand why people have grown disillusioned with this administration.

But our political contributions don't support the government. The vast majority is spent on campaigns seeking the electrification of rail, encouragement of rail freight, arguing politically for cab improvement or lobbying on pensions. Because these are political activities, we would not be able to pursue them without a political fund. A great deal of the remainder is spent supporting individual MPs who share ASLEF's core values.

Last April Jack Straw suggested that all union contributions should be handed over to Labour centrally so that the Party could decide the best way to spend it. ASLEF despatched a large flea into the ear of the Minister of Justice. Our members will spend their political fund in the way they wish – not how Mr Straw or anyone else finds it convenient.

Apart from the fund financing political lobbying on rail issues, it's also used to support constituencies with MPs who support ASLEF policies or who have a special interest in transport. We don't use your money to back politicians who show no sympathy for trade union values or interest in rail.

I have only to look back at the letters pages of the Journal over the past months to see evidence of our members' discontent with the government. But I think the question to ask is 'How can this be improved?' rather than 'How can we distance ourselves?'

If we ended up with no political fund, we would not only be isolated from the political process – we would also lack the means of getting back in. That would leave us a much weakened campaigning organisation. I hope you'll agree it's worth two pints a year to make sure that doesn't happen.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

ASLEF CELEBRATES TRADE UNION MARTYRS IN DORSET

Once again a delegation from ASLEF's District 8 descended upon the Dorset village of Tolpuddle last month to celebrate its trade union martyrs reports

Alistair Reay

EVEN the coach driver who took us to the Festival on Sunday 20 July was an ex ASLEF member from Cricklewood branch. What more could you ask for?

For many, the highlight on the day was the procession of banners down the main high street. Among the many national unions and local branches represented were members from ASLEF's District 1 and 8. The day also included speeches from TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber, an Iraqi trade unionist and Tony Benn, while music was provided by the Alabama 3 and Robb Johnson and comedy by the likes of Elvis McGonagall.

Special thanks must go to Tony West and his colleagues from the Retired Members Section for a remarkable magic show. They kept up an endless stream of 'the very last ticket available' for the RMS raffle!

I'm sure we'd all like to thank Steve Grant, the District 8 Organiser, for his help in organising this trip and to East Finchley / Golders Green, Neasden and West Brompton Branches for their support.



WHO WERE THE MARTYRS?

TOLPUDDLE is a village in Dorset where in 1833-34 a great wave of trade union activity took place and a lodge of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers was established. Entry into the union was a shilling.

In March 1834 six farm labourers were sentenced to 7 years in a penal colony in Australia for being trade union activists. The six - George and James Loveless, James Brine, James Hammett, Thomas Stansfield and his son John Stansfield - were arrested for uttering unlawful oaths. The real reason was that they dared to protest at their poverty wages.

The government at the time, in league with landowners, had become alarmed that the working class were speaking out against working conditions and forming unions. They were determined to quell the uprising, and had the men arrested.

Following a trial, the six Martyrs were quickly deported to Australia. After a petition was signed by 250,000 people and over 30,000 protesters had joined a march on Whitehall supporting them, their sentences were remitted and eventually the Tolpuddle Martyrs were given free passage home from Australia.

PROUD TO BE ASLEF

ASLEF MEMBERS joined last months Pride celebrations in Brighton to march for greater equality for the LGBT community and to promote trade unionism to LGBT

workers.

ASLEF has had a presence at Pride events throughout the UK this year including events in Birmingham, London and Manchester.

ASLEF's LGBT Representative Committee exists to offer confidential advice and support on a range of issues from bullying in the workplace to advice on whether or not employees should reveal their HIV status to its LGBT members.

Information on the role trade unions can play in the workplace was available from a stall at the event which followed the march in the city's Preston Park.

Brighton and Hove Pride, with its emphasis on the community remains the largest free Pride event in the UK.



UNION TRIALS COMPANY WEBSITES

FOLLOWING the success of the unions' recently-upgraded website, the Executive Committee decided that in order to keep members more informed on company issues, each Company Council could have their own extension of the website.

The new company-specific websites are being trialled with 3 companies for a period of 4 months. If they prove to be successful they will be available to all TOCs and FOCs employing ASLEF members.

The 3 companies taking part in the trial are EWS/I, Southeastern and National Express East Anglia (NEEA). Two members of the company council for each company are responsible for maintaining the site and ensuring it contains relevant information to the members within their company.

General Secretary Keith Norman said of the project 'This is a big step for the union. We are expanding our communication fields to the membership and also bringing our



union into line with other major unions throughout Europe in terms of technology.'

The websites can be found at the following address or through the links on the main ASLEF website:
www.aslef.org.uk/ews/i
www.aslef.org.uk/southeastern
www.aslef.org.uk/nea



ROSCO ENQUIRY CRITICISES FRANCHISING

LAST year the Department for Transport triggered an enquiry to look into over-charging (the government suggested a figure of around £177million) by the firms who lease rolling stock to rail franchises (ROSCOs). To the government's alarm, the Competition Commission blamed the problems on the government's franchising methods.

The Commission says that train operators had a 'very limited number of rolling stock options available' when bidding for franchises, and that this automatically restricts competition. It blamed a 'shortage of vehicles available for lease at the point franchises are being let, technical and operational factors... and costs and risks in switching or introducing new rolling stock'.

Contrary to what the government intended when it referred ROSCO profits to the Commission, the report did not blame the rolling stock providers – mainly Angel Trains, Porterbrook and HSBC Rail. These three have invested more than £6bn since privatisation and Diana Guy who chaired the commission explained, 'We have found that there is active rivalry between ROSCOs for the leasing of new rolling stock at its first lease.'

However, due to the way that the DfT micro-manage franchise bids there was frequently 'little or no competition to the existing incumbent fleet'. This was due to 'detailed specification', the department's refusal to allow operators to buy new trains on cost grounds and the fact that franchises were too short 'and not awarded simultaneously'.

Keith Norman says the report demonstrates the 'bizarre and inadequate' franchising systems. 'At least when the railways were nationalised British Rail could make operational and engineering decisions based on their knowledge and expertise,' he said. 'Now a technical rail decision is just as likely to be made by an accountant!'

NEWS IN BRIEF



UNION RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK IN SARKOZY'S FRANCE

Our French sister union the CGT says that this year has seen increasing attacks on rail trade union representatives for carrying out trade union duties and accepting collective responsibilities.

Last month the employer – the SNCF – took Brother Eric Ferreres, Secretary of the CGT's railway section in Toulouse, to court as an individual because of his role in collective union action.

The CGT has pledged itself to resist the repression of union rights in France. 'We do not accept that trade union activity should be treated as a criminal offence,' said CGT international officer Henry Wascin.

Keith Norman, ASLEF's general secretary, said that Sarkozy's government had many of the values of Thatcher in the UK. 'We know how difficult it is to regain worker's rights when they have been taken away,' Keith says. 'We will do all we can to support our French brothers and sisters.'

LONDON CROSSRAIL GETS THE OK FROM ASLEF

KEITH NORMAN, the general secretary of ASLEF, said he was very pleased at last month's announcement that Crossrail was finally 'out of planning and into production'. 'London has suffered greatly from not having an east-west rail link,' he said. 'It has the potential to ease road congestion, help encourage people onto public transport, improve the environment and provide a boost for business.'

The scheme has, after three years of Parliamentary debate and stalling, finally been approved. The £16bn project will link Maidenhead in Berkshire to Shenfield in Essex via Heathrow airport and central London. It involves building a number of new stations and the first trains are expected to start running in 2017.

'I want to see the building start before we start the celebrations,' Keith said. 'Let's not forget that Crossrail was first approved back in 1990. It was shelved that time – we mustn't allow that to happen again.'

Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly says Crossrail will 'generate jobs and economic growth, help revitalise some of our most deprived areas and deliver major improvements for the travelling public.'

'I hope this signals total government commitment to the future of rail,' Keith said. 'Anyone searching for transport that is potentially affordable, reliable and environmentally friendly will find that rail is the only show in town.'

COMMISSIONS UNDERTAKEN FOR ORIGINAL OIL PAINTINGS AT COMPETITIVE PRICES

ARTIST

Frederick James Taylor
Guild of Railway Artists (Assoc. Member)
Guild of Wiltshire Artists

These pictures of my work show samples of oil paintings produced from black/white and colour photos. If you have a favourite photo or locomotive that you would like painted specifically for you, then please contact me to discuss your requirements.

Although I specialize in painting trains, I also undertake a wide variety of other subjects including aircraft, portraits, animals, landscapes etc. To find out more about my work, please log on to my website.



9F at Willesden circa 1963



GWR Dean Class at Brinkworth



The Princess Royal



King Edward I

CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel. 01793 871004 Mob. 07740 516238
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Meeting our Waterloo

RESPONDING to questions about what capital investment the DfT plans to make at Waterloo station in the next 10 years Rail Minister Tom Harris said the department is planning a large scheme to make the platforms at Waterloo long enough to accommodate 10 and 12 car trains and in addition, to modify the junction layout on the approaches to the station. He said this would increase capacity by allowing up to 50 per-cent longer trains.

He added that the scheme presented opportunities at Waterloo International to reconfigure the passenger circulation space and the interchange with other transport modes, and to better integrate the station into the surrounding area. The DfT has included an allowance of £150m-£200m in the High Level Output



Specification (HLOS) for these and the associated works on the South Western network. The works should be completed by 2012-2014.

Harris said the DfT is working closely with Network Rail and Stagecoach South Western Trains (SSWT) to finalise the design and costs of the partial conversion of Waterloo International to accommodate some domestic services meaning some services could use platform 20 of Waterloo International from December 2008. This scheme is likely to cost in the region of £5 million.



Jamieson backs not for profit franchise

CATHY JAMIESON called for a fundamental review of Scotland's railways as, flanked by ASLEF activists, she announced she was standing for Labour Leader in Scotland. She said she backs calls for the mutualisation of Network Rail on a not-for-profit basis.

'But we need to go further. The way the SNP government extended FirstScotrail's franchise is a disgrace. There was no consultation and they excluded passengers, trade unions and other key stakeholders from their deliberations. We have seen no evidence that it delivers value for money.'

When the current contract expires I want a not-for-profit franchise. I want safety as the top priority - and I want the money generated to be ploughed back into improving standards and services.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

ASLEF MEETS BORIS JOHNSON'S TRANSPORT POLICY ADVISER ASLEF met with new London Mayor Boris Johnson's transport policy adviser Kulveer Ranger and head of transport policy Kevin Austen in August. Ranger welcomed the opportunity to meet with the union emphasising that one of the key priorities was working with all stakeholders in delivering the infrastructure enhancements within the timeframe of the 2012 London Olympics and beyond.

General Secretary Keith Norman highlighted the importance of maintaining channels of communication with the new regime at City Hall notwithstanding political differences in the interests of tube drivers as well as the travelling public.



EUROSTAR HEADS TO UK Eurotunnel expects to bid for the High Speed One rail line which the UK government is likely to put up for sale next year. Jacques Gounon, chairman of the Channel tunnel operator, said at the presentation of its first half results.

"I don't know why we would not be a candidate," noting that he expects the government to invite tenders from May next year.

The UK government announced at the end of last year that it intends a three-way split for London & Continental Railways (LCR), owner of the UK arm of Eurostar.

LCR's rail line and stations would form one tranche, with other property constituting a second and its Eurostar stake the third.

High Speed One, which links the Channel tunnel with London, opened in November last year, reducing the journey time between London and Paris by 20 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes.

Announcing a first half yearly net profit of 26 million euros as sales rose faster than it expected to 386 million euros, Eurotunnel said sales growth may slow in the second half compared to the six months to June.



NEW COOLING SYSTEM FOR CLASS 57 A new cab cooling fan is to be fitted in No 1 end of the Class 57 310. The fan is the same design as that fitted to the Class 220 / 221 Voyager Trains. It consists of a two-speed fan that can be positioned by the driver. It will be fitted across the Class 57 fleet with immediate effect.

SAT NAV MAN AVOIDS PRISON In last month's issue we reported that a delivery man who had driven onto a level crossing and caused a collision with a Newcastle to Whitehaven train had blamed his sat-nav for sending him down a country track and onto the line. He was given a 13 week suspended jail sentence and was also ordered to carry out 200 hours community work and pay costs of £60. Delivering the verdict the bench said: 'If it hadn't been for the actions of the train driver, it could have been much worse.'

COMPANY NEWS

ELECTIONS Freightliner Heavy Haul. Bro M Lang, Bristol, has been elected to the Freightliner Heavy Haul-South 1 Constituency.

REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF sanctioned rest day working on Virgin West Coast until 27 September 2008.

PAY REVIEWS

Tube Lines: Members voted for a two year pay offer of 4.95 % from April 1 2008 and an increase of RPI plus 0.75 % in year two.

SERCO: Members voted in favour of a three year pay settlement of 4.5% in first year. 3% or RPI plus 0.5 in year two and 3% plus 0.5% in year three.

VIRGIN WET COAST PAY:

Members voted for a four year offer consisting of 5.1 % in year one, and RPI plus 0.5% in subsequent years.

LONDON MIDLAND: The EC accepted an offer for 2008 of a no strings increase of 5% or £800, whichever is greater.

SOUTH WEST TRAINS:

Depot Driver's voted for an increase of 4.5% from the October 2007 anniversary date and an increase of RPI from October 2008

WE want the government to retain at least one Train Operating Company in public hands, excluding it from the franchising process, for four compelling reasons.

Firstly, the public firm could act as a model or standard by which other franchises could be compared. We believe that if a public, not-for-profit franchise provided rail transport with the funding a private firm would have received – then it would do a much better job in terms of providing the type of services the public wants.

It would also have the staff commitment and public service ethic to improve working lives and conditions.

● Secondly, in place of a rather sterile and divisive statement of prejudices – like ‘public bad, private good’ – we could be in the position to have a sensible and serious debate about rail ownership.

If during the experimental period it was proven that a public not-for-profit franchise had no advantages, the government’s continuation with the Tory’s privatisation exercise would be to some extent justified. This is something we would test with confidence.

● Thirdly, it would make the public aware of how much a ‘private’ railway costs them.

Up to 1994/95 when the process of privatisation began, the nationalised railway cost the tax payer an average of about £1.2 billion a year. Since privatisation, the cost to the state has continuously increased and reached over £6.3 billion last year.

Each bid for a franchise costs a company around £7



Northern Ireland Railways maintains the whole Network including infrastructure, ticket prices and rolling stock

million. If successful, this cost is refunded by the taxpayer. All this could be saved, or reinvested into the industry, if we adopted the not-for-profit model.

All in all, about £1 billion is taken out of the industry every year in private profits. Richard Branson’s 51% share in Virgin Rail, for example, brought him £24 million last year. These are profits which a nationalised railways could reinvest (or not make in the first place!).

● Fourthly, our proposal would be at nil-cost to the Treasury. The experiment would begin when a current franchise ends and the public TOC would receive no more than a private franchisee.

The government is prepared to subsidise private firms by £187 million a week to run a rail network extremely inefficiently – why won’t it give the opportunity to a public firm to see if – and how – improvements can be made?

NORTHERN IRELAND AND NEW ZEALAND SHOW WE’RE RIGHT!

There is one remaining state-owned train operator in the UK – Northern Ireland Railways (NIR). It’s seldom mentioned, probably because it combines it public ownership with improvement and expansion. NIR is also the only company operating a vertical integration model – that is, it maintains the

whole Network including infrastructure, ticket prices and rolling stock.

And how is the public, not-for-profit ‘franchise’ working?

In 2002 the regional Transport Strategy (RTS) said it aimed to increase passenger numbers by 60% over 10 years. Last year, in year six, numbers had increased by 49%.

Staff numbers have risen from 750 in 2006 to 800 today. Four years ago NIR employed 80 train drivers: now that figure is 125.

NIR went through 2007 without raising fares. During the same period UK fares increased by an average 6.8%. Due to energy price increases, fares in Northern Ireland have



KEEP ONE FRANCHISE PUBLIC SAYS UNION

The union has been arguing with politicians and pressure groups that at least one franchise should remain in public hands. ‘It remains ASLEF – and, incidentally, Labour Party! – policy that rail in its entirety should be returned to the public sector,’ says Keith Norman. ‘However, we found we were getting nowhere simply insisting on this policy, so we’ve put up this compromise as a way of making progress. ‘We believe what we seek is reasonable and logical. The only question is whether politicians will prove to be the same.’ On this page we outline the main reasons ASLEF is putting forward to support our claim ...

gone up by 5% - but UK prices are up by 6.9%. The cost of a 160-mile round trip from Derry to Belfast costs £15.

You can travel from Belfast to Dublin first class for £64, or standard for £29. It's a round trip of 225 miles. A journey of similar length is Bath to Paddington - which at peak hours can cost around £120!

Oh - and NIR is one of the most punctual railways in Britain.

Do you still need convincing that public is better than private rail?

New Zealanders don't!

In the 1990s New Zealand privatised its railways. Earlier this year the Labour coalition renationalised them. Launching the new, publicly owned KiwiRail, finance minister Michael Cullen said privatisation had 'been a painful lesson'.

Wayne Butson, leader of the New Zealand transport union RMTU says that from the day that the National government sold the industry to a US-led consortium, it's direction has been 'all down hill'. He says the public as well as the unions were fed up watching private owners 'extracting the cash, replacing it with debt and doing just enough to keep it going'. No one in New Zealand - bar a few maverick investors - mourns the death of private rail.

MAKING PROGRESS

Encouraged by these examples, the union has pursued the 'not-for-profit' argument with UK politicians, and we appear to be making gradual inroads. At the recent Labour Party National Policy



Passenger services have increased and staff numbers have risen within the UK's only State-owned train service

Forum, rail minister Ruth Kelly signed up to an 'examination' of 'all factors and models for the operation of train operating services, including not-for-profit models, which will benefit passengers and taxpayers'.

At the same time Cathy Jamieson, a leading candidate for the Leader of the Labour Party in Scotland, pledged support for a fundamental review of Scotland's railways. She said she wanted to see Network Rail become a 'mutual company on a 'not for profit' basis, called for a Parliamentary enquiry into the extension of First Scotrail's franchise and declare that she is in favour of a 'not for profit' franchise when the current contract expires.

'I want the money generated to be ploughed back into improving standards and services. A 'not for profit' franchise could do this with passengers coming first.'

And so say all of us!



Northern Ireland Railways is the only state-owned UK train operator

Short Rails



ELECTRIFICATION TICKS ALONG Just before the Parliamentary break, Stephen Hammond, the Tory MP for Wimbledon, asked rail minister Tom Harris (left) how many staff were engaged in work concerned with the electrification of rail.

Tom Harris said he didn't know, but 'a number of officials within the Department are currently supporting the industry's work on electrification, in particular by providing technical and economic advice'. He said this was to meet the Secretary of State's aim of developing a prioritised list of potential routes for electrification by the end of the year.

Replying to Sian James MP he said the Department was 'working closely with the rail industry to re-examine the business case for electrification, explore how costs can be reduced and to agree priority schemes' adding that the government aims to produce an 'indicative implementation plan' by the end of 2008.

UNION'S LONDON EDUCATION DEVELOPS The Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) from London Underground met at Arkwright Road last month to discuss what the ULRs had been doing locally, how they had been supporting ASLEF members within the Underground and how they could better communicate between themselves and with other ASLEF members.

Some of the activities the ULRs had already carried out within their workplace were:

- Setting up taster session courses in Computing
- Organised events across Adult Learners Week
- Carrying out Learning Surveys
- Organising notice boards and ULR facilities
- Reviewing the current Learning Agreement

As a result all ASLEF members working on the underground will shortly be receiving a newsletter from the learning group.

VIGIL FOR JAILED CUBANS The Cuba Solidarity Campaign (CSC) has organised a candlelit vigil outside the US Embassy in London from 18.00-19.30 on 7 October. The event is to mark the 10th anniversary of the imprisonment of the 'Miami Five', all of whom are Cuban political prisoners. They were jailed for working to expose terrorist groups operating in Miami against Cuba.

The families of the Miami Five have been denied visas to visit the prisoners. The trial has been condemned by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and by Amnesty International.

SAFETY BILL 'BEFORE END OF YEAR' Late in July the Health and Safety (Offences) Bill successfully completed its Committee Stage in the House of Lords. The Bill seeks to

- raise maximum fines in the lower courts to £20,000 for most HSWA offences;
- make imprisonment an option for most offences; and
- make most offences triable 'either way'.

The Bill is now scheduled to go to Report and Third Reading in the House of Lords on 7 October and it looks increasingly possible that the Bill can become law in November.

CRICKLEWOOD REUNION The next Cricklewood reunion will be at the RAFA Club in Ashburnham Road in Bedford on Friday 10 October from noon onwards. Further information from Grahame Nash in Bristol or Bob Hodson in Wolverhampton.

The ASLEF website...

... all you need at the click of a button



www.aslef.org.uk

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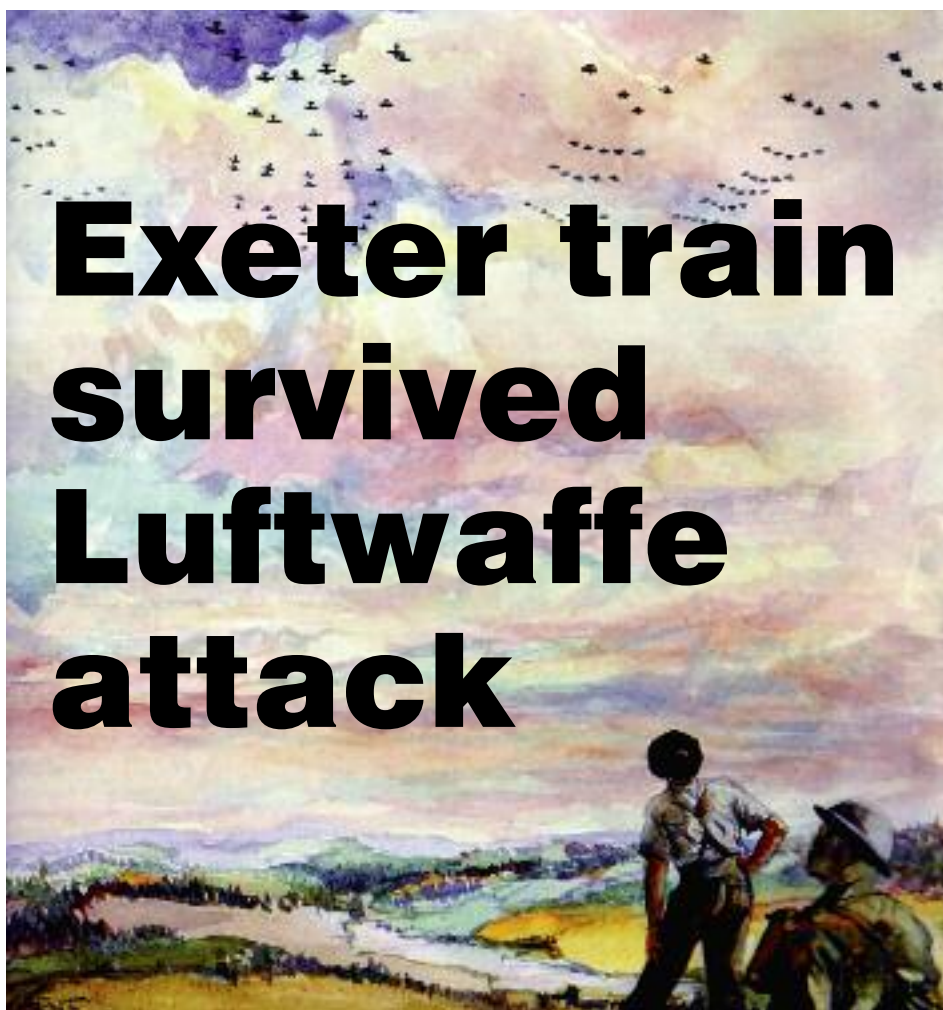
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AJ10000



Exeter train survived Luftwaffe attack

Nigel Haris from Exeter West remembers a Near Miss on the Track to St David's, and appeals for your help.

TOWARDS the end of World War II my mother was working at Park Farm, Bishopsteignton, Devon. While minding her little sister, my aunt Peggy, the peace was shattered by the sound of anti-aircraft fire. From the top field mum saw a German bomber flying low and straight towards her. As mum froze, the plane changed direction, setting its sights on a passenger train travelling between Flow Point and Shaldon Bridge on its way to Exeter.

Mum clearly remembered seeing the pilots face, and the swastika wing markings that identified the enemy aircraft. The plane turned just before it would have flown directly above the farmhouse, causing my uncle, Edward Perkin, who was working in a lower field to jump into a bed of stinging nettles. (Edward later served in the RAF as an engine fitter for 295 Squadron Stirlings).

The Luftwaffe dropped a bomb over the train, followed by a burst of machine gun fire. The bomb missed its target, instead falling harmlessly into the river. Later the plane was shot down by anti aircraft fire



A stone memorial commemorates the bravery of the young crew

over Torbay. The pilot ejected, landing in the sea, where I believe he was picked up and taken prisoner.

Mum later heard that local scoutleader, Fred Paulett, affectionately known as 'Scouty' was part of the anti-aircraft battery that shot the plane down.

Coincidentally my Aunt Sylvia, returning home after nursing duties and waiting for a connecting train at Exeter's St David's



Sergeant J B EGAN

station witnessed the arrival of the lucky train, lucky despite the numerous bullet holes which scared its carriage flanks.

As a driver based in Exeter, I frequently run the same route as this train and remember how close the passengers and crew came to disaster on that day. So far I have never had to run the gauntlet of enemy aircraft overhead.

Mum's saddest memories of the war concern the deaths of three relations. Harold Vivian Perkins of HMS Heckla, who died in 1942 at Cape Agulas, Arthur Ernest Steel who died in North Western Europe in 1944, and James Brian Egan from Chipping Warden who died in 1945. That's one from each of the three armed services.

Having myself served in the RAF from 1978-2000 I am interested in finding out more about James Egan, who used his second name of Brian. Before the war mum and Brian would often take to the water in a rowing boat in Teignmouth. Mum attended Brian's funeral just before the war ended. Brian had only joined the RAF towards the end of the war where he was training as a Wireless Operator / Air Gunner. During a training sortie on April 18, 1945, on Wellington Bomber mk x LP286, the plane overshot the runway at Chipping Warden killing all but one crew member.

Lost were the Pilot, Flight Sergeant WJ Hillier, 24 of St Helens, Navigator, Sergeant H Mairs, 24 of Livingstone Station, Air Bomber Sergeant AG Grant, 21 from Tottenham, Air Gunner Sergeant P McGowan, 20, and mum's cousin J Brian Egan. The only survivor was Air Gunner Sergeant PV Birch, possibly from London.

Via www.aviationresearch.co.uk I made contact with a witness to the accident. Philip Lucas who was ten years old at the time. The crew were remembered with honour. And, now with the kind permission of the owners of Edgecote Estate near Chipping Warden, a stone memorial which was erected on Nov 7-07 commemorates the bravery of these young men.

My research into members of the crew, and their families continues and I would invite anyone wishing to exchange information to get in touch. niggill@tisclai.co.uk

POEMS, PROTESTS AND PARTNERS – WHEN ASLEF MET FOSBR

You can't have enough friends if you're trying to improve the railways. That's the attitude that passengers and staff have taken in Bristol – with some success. Bristol has a considerable rail network, but commuters complain that most suburban stations have an infrequent service. The city's official policy is – thanks to local campaigning – that there should be a minimum half-hour frequency. It is surprising how a few determined campaigners can make a difference, especially if they're people like energetic retired teacher Julie Boston and union activist Bernard Kennedy, the secretary of Bristol, the largest ASLEF branch in District 7.

Chris Proctor went to Temple Meads to talk to them about how they work together, what they have achieved, and to discover what motivates them both ...

BACK in 1995 Julie Boston read in the Bristol Evening Post about plans to close part of the railway branch line from Bristol to Severn Beach. A Sprinter train would run as far as industrial Avonmouth and passengers would be taken the remaining two stops by minibus. 'I was furious,' she says. 'But I wasn't quite sure what to do. First off I wrote a poem!'

Her poetic endeavours are shown in the box on the left – but although it's pointed and entertaining, it clearly wasn't going to be enough to save the line. The only way to get that – was to get organised. So that's what Julie did.

'It can be a surprise when you're scratching round for supporters,' she says. 'People you hadn't considered suddenly show an interest, like cyclists and rambles, for example.'

One of the first publicity events the 'Friends of the Severn Beach Line' organised was to invite the local media to meet them at Avonmouth to watch passengers transfer onto the mini-bus. Out

of the station they flocked – people with disabilities, parents with prams, cyclists with bikes – and of course none of them could be transported by bus!

Meanwhile Julie had been speaking to Bernard Kennedy, ASLEF's branch secretary – and he instantly saw that the union and the campaigners had a great deal in common. 'I was very enthusiastic from the start,' he says. 'It seemed to me a very good use of the branch's political fund.'

BRANCH JOINS UP

Bernard took the issue to the branch, who unhesitatingly backed the campaign. 'I have to be honest. My primary reason for ASLEF getting involved is to defend union members' jobs. More services means more drivers and that means more job security. That's my first duty as a branch secretary.

'But I also see the role as seeking to provide Bristol with the public transport the city needs. I love living in this area – but the congestion and pollution of the city's roads is a major drawback. It is Bristol's single major flaw.'

But this is more than an environment issue. The new alliance of people supporting the passenger campaign group – which had by now branched out to become the Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR) – gave it fresh energy and expertise. Soon the group was able to show that between 1996 and 2006 the number of people travelling to or from stations in South Gloucestershire increased 132%, to or from the City of Bristol by 96%, North Somerset 87% and Bath and NE Somerset 72%.

Julie and a few other supporters took part in the Bath-based 'More Train Less Strain' fare strikes which showed

WORST LATE WESTERN moretrainlessstrain.co.uk

Class	Ticket Type	Fare
Cattle	Standing only	Daylight Robbery
Truck	Issue Date: 28-JUN-08	Punctuality: 26% cancelled or late
From: Here	Rights: Up 10%	Fine: Up 10%
To: There if you're lucky	Route: Hell & Back	

FARE STRIKE

FOSBR has links with the Bath-based 'More Trains Less Strain' group who produced this classic ticket publicity

Half-Hour Train Campaign – response to Bristol City Council budget consultation

Name: _____
Address: _____

I would like Bristol City Council to provide a subsidy (of approximately £450,000) in its 2007/8 budget for a half-hourly rail service from Bristol Temple Meads to Avonmouth.

Signed: _____
Any comments: _____

JOINTS OF SUBURBAN BRISTOL RAILWAYS
17 DORSET AVE, BATH, SOM. BA2 2BJ / 0117 442 4427 / jpb@suburban.co.uk

The post-card that ASLEF funded calling on Bristol Council to provide a subsidy for local rail services



Julie Boston: 'We've got new objectives now, the result of combining the knowledge and interests of users, staff and the council.'



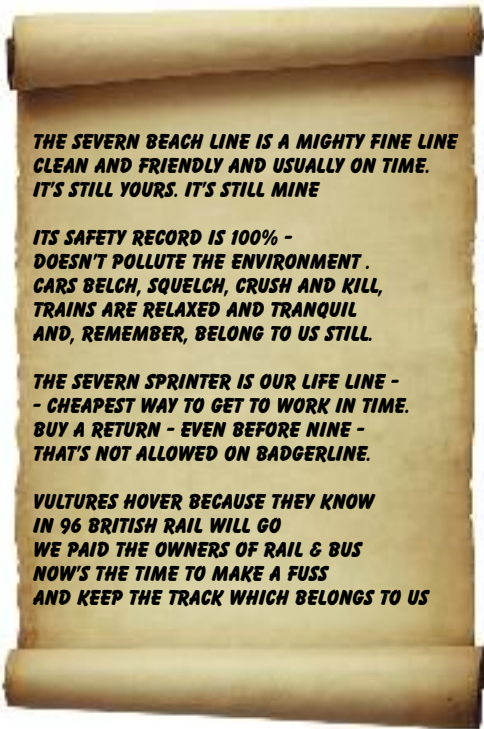
Bernard Kennedy: 'Branches should be involved in this type of campaign. It's a two-way affair: I speak at FOSBR meetings and we've invited them to address our branch.'

commuter frustration with overcrowding, high fares and passengers left on stations.

'Clearly people were unhappy,' Julie said. 'The task was to convert unhappiness into protest.'

COUNCIL PUTS UP £1 MILLION

In 2006 FOSBR launched a 'Half Hour Train Campaign'. Its members organised a petition calling for a rail service at least every half hour between Bristol Temple Meads and Avonmouth. Over 3,000 people signed up in just 10 days. The following year FOSBR organised – and



Julie's 'obsession' with the Beach line started on 15 June 1995 when the Evening Post announced 'Minibus service set to replace Sprinters'. This is the poem she wrote at the time

ASLEF in Bristol funded - a post-card campaign, urging supporters to write to Bristol City councillors asking the Council to invest in a 30-40 minute service .

'At the time the Council did not put any money towards local rail services,' Julie says. 'Thanks to the expertise of some of our new Friends, we were able to show that congestion costs the City over £1 million a week and road accidents cost the city almost double this. The half hourly service would be a positive step to remedy these appalling statistics.'

FOSBR lobbied council meetings, scrutiny meetings and both politicians and prospective candidates – and was rewarded with Bristol City Council committing £1.1 million to pay for an extra train on the Severn Breach branch line over three years. 'Importantly, it showed that the council had the power to act as a transport authority - and that it can use the local rail network to cut congestion and reduce pollution,' Julie says.

And it was no coincidence that Bernard Kennedy was one of the speakers at a meeting celebrating the launch of the subsidised service in May this year. The union had played its part in a campaign that drew support from across the social

and political divide.

But if anyone thought this was the end of FOSBR, they were wrong. It just made campaigners more determined than ever to extend the Half Hour Campaign to the whole of the city. And policy statements alone weren't going to be enough.

USING THE RESOURCES

Bristol actually has a network of rail that could ease the city's congestion and pollution – it simply wasn't using the



After an early hiccup, the Severn Beach line went free for a day. 'That weekend we got more than we asked for!' says Julie

resources. Some lines were only used for freight, like the Portishead line. 'We want to see Ashton Gate station re-opened for passengers,' Bernard says. 'It would allow Severn Beach trains to offer Bristol a first-class cross-city service.'

Julie adds that the city's bus and rail services are dominated by the near monopoly control of First Group. 'We need to ensure that in the future FGW delivers the time-tables in which the Council has invested,' she insists. 'But our work won't be done until we have a fast, cheap and reliable rail service that will make our city brighter, greener and cleaner – a service that all commuters will want to use. Let's be honest – no one wants to drive in town, but they are forced to do so if rail isn't first-class. It's what we want.'

Bernard agrees. 'I think the whole FOSBR campaign has shown what can be achieved, and it's convinced me that union branches need to be completely involved in transport pressure groups. We have a harmony of interests with passengers in fighting for better services.'

'It also shows that unions are not simply organisations to defend wages and conditions. We have an interest in working with passenger to improve public transport services. The message is that unions are part of the solution, not part of the problem.'

- For more information about the Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways visit www.fosbr.org.uk
- To find out more about ASLEF Bristol's involvement in the campaign, contact Bernard Kennedy through the Journal



Brian (front row, right) next to Colin Smith and in front of Kirkdale's finest

Kirkdale's first 45 year man

KIRKDALE BRANCH welcomed EC President Alan Donnelly, District 3 Organiser Colin Smith and National Organiser Andy Reed to a specially convened branch meeting held in The Casa (home to the sacked Liverpool dockers) back in May.

The well-attended meeting, which included guests from ASLEF's Southport and Birkenhead branches, addressed a number of issues including a proposed points-free Specially Monitored Drivers (SMD) policy to the hotly debated topic of pensions, and especially the union's response to the Pension Commission's Report.

Once the serious business was over, Kirkdale Driver Brian Riley stepped up to a standing ovation to receive his 45 year ASLEF badge. Brian started on the railways as a messenger based at Bootle's Alexandra Dock in 1961 when he was aged just 15. After a brief spell with the S&T, he transferred in 1963 to Southport Loco and the footplate grade where he immediately signed up to be a member of ASLEF.

After a decade as a fireman at Edge Hill, Brian became a driver at Birkenhead (Mollington Street) – a place where he is still held in high regard to this day. He then transferred to Kirkdale in 1986.

Colin Smith expressed great pride in presenting Brian with his 45 year badge. 'Brian was one of the people who you didn't have to run after to join up!' he said.

Animal lover Brian, who can often be seen feeding the stray cats who hang around the depot sidings, has never needed to call on ASLEF for representation, but has always stood shoulder to shoulder when called upon.

He recalls the 1982 Flexible Rostering strike vividly. 'Margaret Thatcher threatened to sack drivers who didn't go back to work. We stood firm, but ended up losing the eight hour day.'

Commenting on his time on the railways, Brian said, 'I've enjoyed every minute of it and I've met some really nice people.'

Tony Whitehead Reporter – Kirkdale Branch

Happy times at Newton Heath

ONCE again we found this annual event upon us – and what a great turn-out at the Millgate in Failsworth! Retired drivers and retired men from other grades turned out with their guests to enjoy a good afternoon together. It was nice to see the number of present-day drivers from the depot, something that always makes the day special. We were also lucky enough to be able to welcome men from other depots who had passed through Newton Heath in their careers.

Once more it was a pleasure to meet

two ex ASLEF officers from our time - Terry Yorke and Les Johnson, both of whom go back a long way with our branch. Again thanks go to Mike Wood and his committee for the organisation and for providing a really fine buffet and his free raffle.

We are all grateful to the 105 members for their continued support through their contributions to the fund which has now been running for 15 years. A great effort – thanks lads!

S. M. BLACK RMS – Newton Heath

Brother Cecil York at 90 and not out!

ON 13 July relations and friends of Bro C.L. York gathered to celebrate his 90th birthday with him. Cecil, who was born on 11 July 1918 is still a member of ASLEF's Retired Members Section.

The celebration, which was organised by Cecil's daughter, Anne and her husband Terry, was held at the Ashbourne Hotel in North Killingholme, which is about four miles from Immingham.

After grace we were treated to a wonderful menu, plenty to drink, good company – and even some sunshine! Cec still retains his witty humour and enjoys a bit of fun.

His sister, Doreen with her husband Bob Francis and the family all joined in the occasion. Other guests included Joe Keeton, who is now 91 and has been a pal of Cec ever since Cec transferred to Immingham in the 1950s, Jim Seed and his wife, Charlie Bell and his sister Dorothy and Joe and Dorothy Padgett.

Cec moved to Immingham from East Anglia Depot after two years in the army. He was elected to the Sectional Council about 1970 and remained on it until his retirement.

Joe Padgett BEM, JP was the branch reporter of Grimsby and Immingham until he retired 17 years ago)

Who are you? Ramsgate asks

DAVE BULL, the lead learner rep at Southeastern, tells us that earlier this year he arranged a 'Who Do You Think You Are?' event in Ramsgate's Traincrew room. He had invited members of the Kent Family History Society (KFHS), led by Sandra Vane, to give help and advice on all aspects of tracing and preserving family history. 'The KFHS attend various family history events all over Kent, but helping to run a road-show in a mess-room was a first!' Dave says.

During the session Ramsgate Driver Colin Sutton discovered how to verify names, dates and places on his family tree. Karl Rodgers' family originates from Wales, but with the aid of the internet he was guided into areas where his family could be traced.

Sandra's team also gave advice on how to store documents like Birth, Marriage and Death certificates. They also urged people to take photos of family houses and surrounding areas so that their children and grandchildren can be aware of their roots.

'I don't think people know the variety of subjects that can be studied through the union's learning service,' Dave says. 'There really is something for everyone.'

Diary date for Liverpool Street

THE Liverpool Street Welfare and Social Club are hosting their annual re-union on Saturday 4 October. We shall also be celebrating two retirements. John Jones is stepping down after 47 years railway service, and John Rust retires after 46 and a half years! All friends, colleagues and ex-colleagues are welcome to join us at the event which will be held at the 'Railway Tavern Hotel' in Stratford.

As you exit Stratford Station, turn left until you reach the traffic lights, then turn left again into Angel Lane. As you go over the bridge (crossing the railway) the Railway Tavern is on the right. It's about a ten minute walk from Stratford Station. A buffet will be provided, and the function will start at approx 1300 hours. We look forward to welcoming you there. If you have any queries please contact John Thorpe on (01621) 851110.



General Secretary branches out!

ON THE 8 July the Swansea branch held a special meeting to which we were delighted to welcome two distinguished members of our branch - General Secretary Keith Norman and District Organiser Stan Moran. We were also pleased to have the Organiser for Scotland, Kevin Lindsay, in attendance.

Branch Chairman Steve Williams opened the meeting, and after welcoming our guests, he invited 'The General' to say a few words.

Keith gave an account of the union's recent history from its turbulent times to the current, financially stable and industrially efficient position. He said how pleased he was to be invited as he had not been back to Wales for over a year.

The Chairman then invited Keith to present 50 year medallions to two of our retired members (and members of the 'Jolly Boys'!) Brothers D.C.R. Thomas ('Dai broc') and John Hoskins. Keith said what a pleasure it was to present the medallions to two loyal ASLEF men, and wished them well in their continued retirement.

The tables were then turned on 'The General', as our Chairman presented Keith with his 45 year badge.

Other presentations of service badges were presented by District Organiser Stan Moran, who made the awards to Brothers Brian Jones (35 years), Paul Warlow (20 years) and Chris Perry (5 years).

The Chairman then invited the Branch Secretary to present Keith with a little something on behalf of the branch, to keep him warm on a dark, damp night - with a warning that it has to be taken in moderation! Then, with the proceedings concluded, everyone adjourned to sample the local brew and buffet which was kindly provided for the occasion.

John Rossiter Secretary - Swansea Branch

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From Wingham via Wigan to Wimbledon!

'I haven't been in a paper since I was ten,' says Tracey Figg. 'I was visiting my father and the local rag snapped me surrounded by my father's St Bernard dogs. I think he was trying to sell them.'

This was in Wigan, where Tracey moved from Wingham in Kent at the age of five.

'I moved around quite a lot,' she says. 'My mother died when I was young, and afterwards I lived with my grandparents in Eltham until I married.'

Tracey's journey to the footplate was by no means direct. After leaving school she trained as a chef at the South East London Technical College in Lewisham. She never worked as a chef, however, because she found she had a talent for cake decoration and followed up this interest working in Selfridges for a couple of years. 'After that I moved on to be a supervisor in Tesco's and before long I'd become manageress of a Percy Ingels shop.'

'The truth is, I had very little idea what I wanted to do. You don't know, do you? You have no idea of the possibilities when you're young.'

Having three children meant that she had to re-think how to earn a living. 'I needed a job that fitted round being a mother, so I started child-minding. To make ends meet I also had a series of evening jobs as well. I worked in a bingo hall for a while, but to be honest, I was drifting.'

In one of those strange ways that life works, Tracey was employed part-time at Blockbusters when a colleague told her he had applied for a job as a tube train driver. He hadn't been successful, but he told her the London Underground (LUL) adverts said they were looking particularly for women and applicants over 50.

'I was a good ten years away from the 'over 50' bracket, but I was definitely a woman!' she says. 'So I thought I might as well apply. It was a spur of the moment thing. I have to say that I'd never in my life thought of driving a train. But I thought I might as well give it a go. You only get one life, so you might as well take opportunities when they show up.'

When LUL invited her for an interview, she found that she took to the tube like a

duck to water. 'I've always been a practical person,' she says. 'And even better, the more my training went on, the more I began to enjoy the job.'

She sailed through the training, and soon found herself at the controls of a District Line tube. 'Most of my friends were surprised at my new career – but I told them that no one was more surprised than me! It was a strange experience at first, very different from driving a car. While you are in control of the speed and braking, you've no control over where you're going.'

How did she feel when she first took tube trains out on her own? Tracey starts to chuckle. 'This is going to sound daft,' she says. 'But do you know what really struck me? It was how dark it was in the tunnels! Doesn't that seem stupid? When you're a passenger you just think it's all lit up!'

'It was quite scary at first. There are a lot of things to be aware of, but gradually most of it becomes second nature. You are still just as conscious of lights and possible hazards, and especially about what's going on when you enter or leave a platform, but somehow eventually you begin to do it without thinking.'

Tracey was helped enormously by the agreement with London Underground to run Link-based rosters, which means that people with commitments have the opportunity to work shifts that are best suited to their lifestyle.

'It shows as well that the employer and the union want to include women in a job that is still male-dominated. I think it's a very positive move.'

Tracey enjoys her work. 'I feel I've fallen on my feet at last,' she says. Like any job, there are down-sides. While she hasn't had to face a fatality, she has had 'heart-stopping' near-misses. 'I once had someone running from the police near Earls Court who sprinted over the track in front of me. I took up the offer of LUL's counselling service and while I can see it might not be useful for everyone, I found it useful.'

Tracey goes along to union meetings when she can, and she's also recently volunteered to be a Union Learning Rep (ULR). 'I sort of fell into it,' she says. 'It



began when I wanted to do an Italian course, mainly to keep the grey cells ticking over. I spoke to Marian Butcher, and she persuaded me to go on a ULR course. I like the idea of being able to point other people in the right direction if they want a new skill. It's a worthwhile thing to do, and a good thing for the union to be involved in.'

This bright and confident woman goes off with a friendly smile and a wave. Cake decoration's loss is certainly LUL's gain!

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

A day out in the midlands and a warning about oil – more snippets from ASLEF's history ...

100 YEARS AGO

The September 1908 Journal carried an account of the first outing organised by the Stourbridge Improvement Class, penned by 'ONE WHO WAS THERE' ...

"We had our first annual outing on July 12. Entraining at Stourbridge we journeyed to Stourport, where we embarked on the steamer to Holt Fleet, having about one hour's ride up the river Severn. Only those who have had the pleasure of riding up the Severn can appreciate the beautiful scenery from Stourport to Holt Fleet. On arriving at our destination we repaired to the hotel to replenish the inner man, for which our members were all ready. After dinner the members separated, some to sit and enjoy the weir, and others for a walk. All too soon the time arrived for us to prepare to make a start for home. We embarked on the same boat for the return journey, when we had to again replenish the inner man. Some of the members thought that having had such a good dinner we should not require any tea, but to have seen the bread and butter, etc., disappearing was a sure sign that the young members especially were blessed with healthy stomachs as well as healthy minds. On arriving at Stourport, having a little time to wait for the train, some of the members went boating up the river, which is a pleasure that we in the Midlands can enjoy, not having the facilities that are available in some places.....

".....As a sequel to the above we presented a pipe and a quarter of a pound of tobacco, subscribed for by members who attended the outing, to the secretary for the able manner in which he conducted the arrangements."

50 YEARS AGO

District Organiser W. Bevan wrote a very telling and modern-sounding article about the dangers of relying on oil in the September 1958 edition ...

"Throughout the ages oil has been the reputed salve for all troublesIt is in the geographical location that oil loses its reputation as a salve for man's troubles, where it gives rise to friction, where it tends to create and not to dispel troubled waters in international relations, troubled waters in which certain Powers so delight to fish. This fact is particularly dangerous at a time when Great Powers are in process of gearing the whole of their economy to power generated from oil, the location of which, resting as it does in a relatively small area at the very junction between the East and West power blocks, offers a well nigh irresistible urge for sabotage on a grand and highly dangerous scale. At this time when Britain is urgently in process of committing her own railway system to motive power based on oil fuel, one wonders whether it would be more expedient to slow down this process and so retain a reasonably high percentage of coal-fuelled transport until such time when the Statesmen of the world should become intelligent and rationally minded people."

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott



OBITUARIES

DAVE O'CONNELL

It is with sorrow that I learnt that Brother Dave O'Connell, formerly an activist in ASLEF District No. 8, was found dead at the end of July.

Dave was a member of London Underground train staff who rose through the line of promotion from guard to train operator and served at various times on the Piccadilly, District, Central and Victoria lines. He was a radical, principled and highly practical socialist who was widely respected and trusted. He was a hard-working and selfless trade unionist in each of the ASLEF branches to which he belonged. He was warm-hearted, kind and great fun, and had a refined and sensitive taste in literature, music and cinema.

I met Dave 20 years ago at White City Depot when I was active in West London Electric branch. When I served ASLEF during the late 1980s and early '90s he was my inspiration, encouragement, good counsel, comic relief and closest friend. Dave was unique and irreplaceable and I will miss him greatly.

When Dave was driving on London Underground he experienced a fatal 'one-under' that hurt him deeply. Those of us who were close to him offered all the help that we could, but he eventually left London for a new life in Chesterfield.

Dave was found dead on the beach at Eastbourne on 28 July. The cause of death has not yet been established, but reports suggest that his body had been in the water. He was 46.

May Dave rest in peace, and may he be cherished by and continue to inspire all those of us who knew him.

Hugh Jaeger - Retired Members Section

FRED WILLIAMS - POPULAR AND FRIENDLY

It is with real sadness that I report the death of Fred Williams at the age of 71 years after his fight against illness both in hospital and at home. Fred was a popular and friendly man who was a credit to his profession. This was amply demonstrated by the number of people who attended his funeral.

Fred, a Salford man, started

DRIVER AMOS WAS JUST THE TICKET



MY dad, Driver Ivan George Amos, passed away on 2 June at the age of 85. He began his working life as a butcher until he was of age to join British Rail. In doing this he was following in his father's footsteps, as my grandfather was Locomotive Fireman Gordon George Amos.

My father began his life-long career with British Rail in the summer of 1942 as a 19-year-old cleaner. He eventually became Driver/Fireman Amos on the good old steam trains until they were phased out in favour of diesel and electrics. He was based at either Clacton-on-Sea or Walton-on-Naze to London Liverpool Street.

He met his lovely Renee in 1943 and two years later they married at St Pater's and St Paul's church in St Osyth. They had three children, a daughter and two sons. A dedicated family man, Driver Amos lived and worked for his family.

As well as being a great husband and a fantastic dad, his hobbies were fishing, clay pigeon shooting, snooker and gardening. In later life he took up bowls and won many accolades.

This is a sad and difficult time for the family, but just to add a little humour - Driver Amos was issued with quite a few speeding tickets - and to the best of my knowledge still holds the record for the most tickets issued!

SUZETTE MIZEN - daughter

his 'loco life' at his local shed at Patricroft in 1953. The following year National Service saw him stationed in the Manchester Regiment at the garrison in Berlin. He remained in the forces until 1956.

The end of steam brought shed closure in 1968 and Fred's transfer preference was Newton Heath, where he remained until retirement.

In Fred's life off the footplate he was an avid supporter of rugby league and he backed his team - the Salford Reds - through good times and bad. It was a highlight when his son signed as a professional at the club.

Fred was a special man, and our thoughts are with his wife and family at this sad time.

S. Black - Reporter - RMS

JIM TAPP - FORMER TONBRIDGE BRANCH SEC

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of Jim Tapp, who fought his illness for two years.

Jim worked tirelessly for ASLEF. He served on the LDC for 20 years and was our Branch Secretary for seven.

Condolences to all his family.

Jim will be sadly missed.

Dave Weddle Tonbridge

DICK WATERS

Dick Waters passed away recently after a long illness. He was 86.

Dick started on the railway in 1938 in Peterborough. He then did his firing at Camden before transferring to Willesden depot in the 1950s to become a driver. Under the tutelage of Harry Doyle and Eric Doody he began

to perfect his trade union skills.

Dick returned to Camden and became an LDC member in 1958, where he oversaw the closure of Camden and the transfer of the men to Euston in 1966. He created the first 'socialist depot' on the system by sharing the mileage from the senior man to the junior man at the dept, causing much resentment from the senior ranks.

Dick was elected to Sectional

Council B in 1968 after fierce opposition from the NUR. He successfully retained his position, and eventually became Council Chairman in 1982, a position he retained until his retirement in 1985.

Dick was a true stalwart and a great friend who will be sorely missed.

Eddie Flattery former Secretary - Euston Branch
Cliff Holloway Secretary - Euston Branch

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YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9

Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

CHEAPEST DOESN'T MEAN BEST

I don't wish to give any recognition to this years' version of the 'Federation of Professional Railway Workers' – but I want members considering joining it to be made aware of some truths.

Shaun Brady is the acting GS. and one of the District Organisers is Paul Wightman, who was on the SWT Company Council with Brady.

This was the same Council that managed through their negotiating skills to cut our working week from 39 hours to 44.5 hours (and that's not a typo error). It achieved the distinguished honour of putting drivers working for the biggest profit making franchise on one of the lowest hourly rates of pay in the industry.

They also successfully negotiated the infamous drivers' compensation scheme which in effect meant drivers paid for their own sickness after 13 weeks - and at a substantially reduced price. Drivers ended up with £1,000 take home pay per month as opposed to the average £1,500 at time of introduction. It remained at £1,000 until its

removal on 31 July this year.

They also managed to pave the way forward for all subsequent pay awards to be 'self funding' - which possibly explains why we are the only drivers receiving below inflation pay awards as we enter a recession. This is despite both SWT and the parent company boasting record profits. Add to this probably the worst SMD and Drivers Attendance Procedures, and it's difficult to see the attractions of the cheaper version of a union on offer. Their website, for example, proudly claims to put members in touch with legal advice – but doesn't say whether it's free!

People who know me will be aware that I supported Brady during the recent upheavals within ASLEF. I took part in the march to Head Office and attended some meetings (unlike Mr Wightman, such was his support). I still believe Brady exposed a lot of what was rotten about ASLEF at the time and believe he should not have been sacked. Now, however, he has become a hypocrite, and is damaging the people who supported him, all in an attempt to gain his own personal revenge on the union.

Not so long ago Brady even named officers who had (quote) 'scabbed and are now running our union' - yet now he is engaged in a recruitment drive akin to the scene from Blazing Saddles, and taking on board anybody regardless of their previous socialistic ideals.

He is weakening the resolve of the people who supported him, and thereby adding strength to train companies like SWT. Is it any wonder that companies will entertain him and his like with tea and coffee and allow him access to our membership? Whose camp is he in? With hindsight looking at our DRI (which Shaun told me he opposed but sold it because the other two council members supported it) you might enquire which camp he belonged to all along.

Life can be strange. The third Council member with Brady and Wightman chose the

(Continued on page 20)

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(Continued from page 19)

managerial path when he wasn't re-elected. Now that all three have shown their colours, the manager is the one I feel closest to trusting.

I have this to say to my former friend. 'You are no worse than the people you despised, opposed and fought against. Unfortunately you are also no better. In fact, you're one of them. Goodbye.'

Paul Flanagan Chairman -
Bournemouth

WIDOWS RIGHTS TO TRAVEL FACILITIES

I'VE been doing the District 5 website for about 5 years and we get enquiries from members on a range of issues. Recently there have been a number of questions about the lack of reliable and accurate information on travel facilities for the widows, widowers and surviving partners of rail staff. This could affect the families of many ASLEF members.

Rail staff are generally all aware of our travel facilities and entitlements. If we want to use something out of the ordinary we might not know for sure, but we know who to ask. Most of us never consider how our surviving partner (or children) would cope if we were gone. They wouldn't have our information network but we probably assume there is something in place to ensure dependents get the entitlements that we have earned for them. Many think there would be knowledgeable staff at the local station who would be able to give the travel information needed but, due in part to the break-up of the railway, there might not be. So, all the entitlements that have been fought for and that you've accrued during your career might go unused through a lack of accurate information.

If this were our pensions we'd all rightly be up in arms. Travel is a valuable commodity to be protected as well.

If you know of anyone whose partner has died check they know what their travel entitlements are and ensure they are getting them. They

BRIGHT IDEAS ON FREE RAIL TRAVEL



I TAKE it that as we have not heard much about the campaign for free travel for all rail staff, things are not progressing well with the companies.

I was thinking about this as I paid £15.40 for a priv single ticket to go from Euston to Birmingham New Street. The public can pay as little as £10.50 if they book in advance – so a 'priv' is hardly privileged! As getting all the TOCs to agree to free travel, I've come up with a couple of ideas to consider.

Firstly we could try to get ATOC to put a cap on the priv rate. For example, the current 75% off standard day and open tickets would apply as normal, but there would be a maximum price, say £10, for priv tickets, regardless of journey length, etc. So, my Euston to New Street journey would cost £10, rather than £15.40, and tickets under the £10 cap would continue as normal. A maximum fare of around £10 would be a fair price and might encourage more staff to use the train for those longer journeys where even the priv fare cannot compete against the cost of other transport modes. Also, ATOC and the TOCs would be more open to the idea (hopefully!) than free travel, because we are still paying to use the service. If the other rail unions would join in too then hopefully the companies would feel the pressure to do something.

Alternatively ASLEF could start its own form of staff pass. This may be a more difficult option, because it would still mean TOCs agreeing to accept the pass for its services. It would involve ASLEF setting up a members' voluntary travel scheme. The cost of the passes could be covered by members joining the scheme, paying a small subscription price each month to join. For this we would receive a travel pass to use on the services of TOCs who will accept the pass. Maybe accepting the passes could be part of pay deals with the companies. The more TOCs that accept the pass, the more members would be willing to join such a scheme – which would be even more attractive if it included partners and dependents. The pass should only be valid for travel when members are NOT on duty, so the companies cannot withdraw current staff travel arrangements. At least this would open up free travel to our brothers and sisters working for freight companies, who currently get nothing. Although paying for our own passes may not be ideal, its probably better for non-safeguarded staff than the present arrangements.

I will be interested to know what other Journal readers think.

STUART MARLOW - Saltley Cross Country Branch (and non-safeguarded!)

might not be elderly or retired but statistically they are more likely to be, so let Tony West the Secretary of the Retired Members Section know if you hear of anyone who has had problems getting the travel facilities they are entitled to. His email address is westwall@btinternet.com

In the meantime, make sure your husband, wife or partner knows about everything they would be entitled to if the worst happens and also where they need to go to get it.

Jim Peters – Webmaster –
www.aslef-dc5.org.uk

EQUALITY OR DISCRIMINATION?

IN THE August issue Victoria Phillips, legal adviser from Thompsons Solicitors, extolled the virtues of 'positive action'. This is the new PC phrase replacing 'positive discrimination' - and the proposed Equality Bill will allow employers to legally discriminate against employing individuals of 'certain groups' that they feel are over represented in their work force,

hoping that two wrongs might make a right. 'Certain groups' means primarily white males but ultimately could mean any ethnic origin, race or religion. Have we gone mad?

What 'certain group' you are in will probably depend on what personal information you are required to divulge in a job application form, like race, religion, gender, gender preference, age, disability, illness, height ... the list could go on. Initially it appears to be a piece of laughable, PC, loony left legislation but think about it some more and you realise it's actually quite sinister. We all hope that any personal information given on a job application form would not be a deciding factor on the application's success and if it was then some law would be contravened. Now it seems it might be legally endorsed.

I don't really think of my female, black and Asian colleagues as separate groups but simply as fellow drivers. Are any minority groups going to thank you for categorising them differently? Isn't this what we've been fighting against all these

years? Equal opportunities at work is all about offering employment without discrimination or bias, for the sake of everyone. Let's keep it that way. I ask ASLEF to take a political stance against this Bill.

Rob Binsted – Eastleigh -
Hants

WHO IS ALAN WARBANK?

Thanks for placing the article about a valued colleague from the Portsmouth branch who retired recently.

Alan's name is actually Alan Wallbank. I don't know where the 'Alan Warbank' came from in the August edition.

Still, it gives me the opportunity to say a fond farewell to Alan once again!

John Glazebrook –
Secretary - Portsmouth & IOW
Branch

NO BIGOTED LANGUAGE IN THE JOURNAL, PLEASE

I should like to take issue with the editorial decision to print the word 'scabbed' in the

LETTERS to the EDITOR

obituary Ray Cooper wrote for Peter Bethell in the August edition.

Surely if we are to portray ourselves as a modern and professional union, we should not be printing such bigoted language.

We are all well acquainted with the activities of a minority in 1982, but to perpetuate such bitterness does us no credit.

I feel that such negative terminology has no place in the obituary of a fine man with whom I was proud to work.

Martyn Hartley - Doncaster

ALSEF IS IN IT

I attended the ASLEF 'Using IT for Organising' course at Esher Place from 30 July to 1 August along with Company Council Colleagues from DRS, EWS, Freightliner Intermodal, Gatwick Express, Serco, South-Eastern and TPE. I'd like to offer our sincere thanks to ASLEF Education & Training Organiser Julie Weekes and our tutor, TUC Information Technology expert Mahmood Anwar. They provided an extremely enjoyable and informative course. My fellow attendees and I will be amazing and annoying our colleagues with our new found skills for months to come - and our hands will be a flying frenzy of keyboard dexterity worthy of Rick Wakeman himself thanks to the short cuts and tips that we learnt during our many, many hours in the classroom.

I would also like to thank the National Organiser Andy Reed for opening the course and my

colleagues on the various Company Councils for their enjoyable company, advice and comradeship.

Alan Griffiths - Secretary -
London Midland Company
Council

RED FACED OVER LINCOLN

IN the August 2008 Journal an article was headed 'Lincoln meeting causes disruption'. In fact the meeting referred to was held by Nottingham Branch on the 13 July 2008, causing wide spread disruption in Nottinghamshire area. Lincoln drivers were working normally but were asked to accept new diagrams for that day only, while the rest of work was covered by buses.

Since then all our services at Lincoln have been covered by bus due to massive engineering work to replace all signal boxes and semaphore signalling in that area. To my knowledge no meeting has been held at Lincoln to discuss Sunday working.

Stuart Roberts - ASLEF
representative for Lincoln

THANKS FOR THE BADGE!

HAVING retired from the industry on 11 July 1998, I would like to thank the union very much for the 50 year medallion that the General Secretary sent to me recently. It has given me and my wife Rosie a lot of pleasure.

Ian Munro - Worthing -
Sussex

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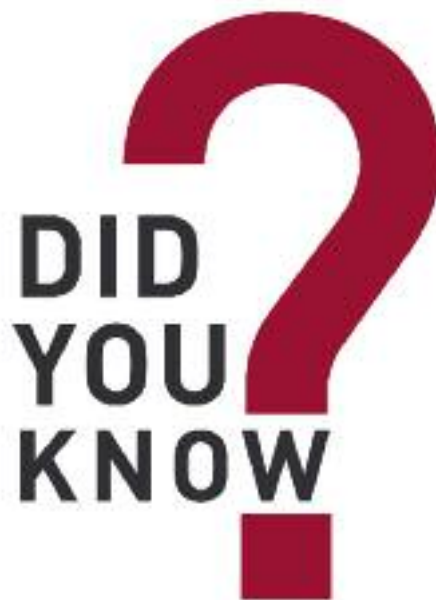
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Chattanooga Choo Choo

BY SYLVIE SIMMONS

I WOULD have taken a train from the airport, honest, but as anyone who's been to the U.S. knows, passenger trains, once you venture beyond New York and the East, are rarer than a film star who's kept their own face. It was a hot, lazy, Southern afternoon and the taxi driver was in no hurry, entertaining me with a tale of the last passenger he'd picked up from England - a man who had three wives, all of them alive, and one of them studying at Chattanooga University.

I'd come to interview Robert Plant, Led Zeppelin's singer, who was touring the American south with a bluegrass star named Alison Krauss. This did not elicit the dropped jaw disbelief and awe I expected. The driver had never heard of Led Zeppelin, and my back-seat rendition of *'Stairway to Heaven'* strangely did nothing to help. "You like music," he said. "Have you heard of *'The Chattanooga Choo Choo'*?"

There can't be anyone old (or maybe that should be young) enough to go out alone after dark who doesn't know the most famous train song ever. Is that an argument I hear in the back? Go on then, name a more celebrated song about a train. Okay, there's the *Last Train to Clarksville*, but that's not about a specific locomotive, or the *Orange Blossom Special*, the *Wabash Cannonball* or that train with no name that Johnny Cash listens to from his cell on death row in Folsom Prison, having shot a



man in Reno just to watch him die.

But all bow in we-are-not-worthiness at the wheels of the Southern Railway steam engine that made its first trip in 1880, its last in 1969 and huffed its way into musical history after inspiring the song that sold more than a million copies for Glenn Miller in 1941. It was the first song ever to be awarded a gold record.

"Pardon me, boy / Is that the Chattanooga Choo Choo? / Track twenty-nine / Boy, you can gimme a shine / Dinner in the diner / Nothing could be finer / Than to have your ham an' eggs in Carolina".

All manner of musicians have tackled it in the 67 years since, from The Shadows to the Andrews Sisters, Bill Haley to Manhattan Transfer, Celine Dion to Gene Wilder, who parodied it in the film *'Young*

Frankenstein.'

It was written for a less than memorable 1940s movie called *'Sun Valley Serenade'* by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren (who also wrote *'Jeepers Creepers'*) and tells a heartwarming tale about a man who takes a train from Pennsylvania Station, New York, to Tennessee, to see the gal he left behind. (*"Satin and lace / I used to call 'funny face' / She's gonna cry / Until I tell her that I'll never roam / So Chattanooga Choo Choo / Won't you choo-choo me home? Eminem, eat your heart out).*

As any trainspotter will tell you, he would have actually boarded one of the Cincinnati Southern Railroad's nameless 2-6-0 steam locomotives. It was a Chattanooga newspaper reporter who gave the chugging train its nickname and the tourist board, if such a thing existed back then, a major cause for celebration. For the city once known as the site of the bloodiest battle in the American Civil War would now be forever linked to the golden age of the railroad. Even the National Model Railroad Association made Chattanooga its home.

"That's the Choo Choo, over there", said the taxi driver, pointing to a building a few streets away. On the roof was a red neon sign shaped like an old engine.

The place was astonishingly tranquil. Old trains rested in their sidings, which were separated by little lawned gardens. The air was sweet and warm. A toad, one of the few living creatures around, hopped towards a water-sprinkler, not something you'll see at Euston, and, at the far end of the station, brightly painted in red and green livery like a model engine dressed for Christmas, stood the choo choo itself.

No one tried to sell me anything, not even a ticket, as I walked around unmolested, other than by an old couple who wanted me to take their photo. They told me, with the same pride I'd told the taxi driver about Robert Plant, that they were celebrating their 60th anniversary in a sleeping car. The station was bought by the Holiday Inn chain, who refurbished several train cars, which now boast 'all of today's conveniences', including internet access, though not wireless, the signal can't transmit through the thick metal construction. Everything in fact, except actually taking you, like a train is supposed to, from A to B.

Still there is one passenger train in operation in Chattanooga. A funicular railway described as the steepest in the world. Called "The Incline" it runs up the side of Lookout Mountain, where I found another of this remarkable little town's attractions, Rock City, a mini Grand Canyon, complete with crags and swinging bridges and caves inhabited by posed garden gnomes. It even had piped music - though not, surprisingly, *'Stairway to Heaven'*.

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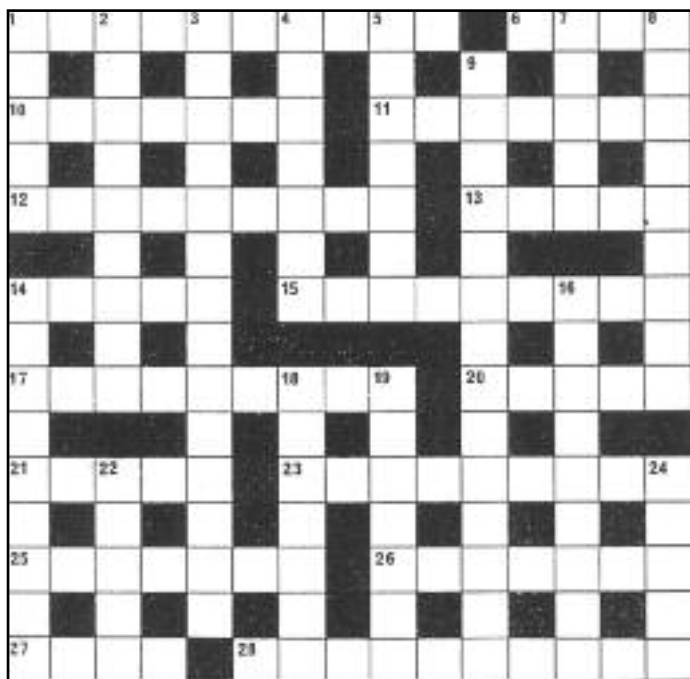
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ASLEF *more than just a union*



Prize Crossword No. 29

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 28 which appeared in the August edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Nigel Adkins** from **Hertfordshire**.

ACROSS 1 Passenger 8 Bristol Rovers 11 Newt 12 Clean 13 YWCA 16 Printer 17 Expects 18 Cagoule 20 Snowcap 21 Oils 22 Avert 23 Etna 26 Travel By Train 27 Inspiring **DOWN** 2 Apse 3 Spoiler 4 Narrate 5 Envy 6 Crowning Glory 7 Prawn Cocktail 9 Inspector 10 Marsupial 14 Stout 15 Spoon 19 Envelop 20 Sprayer 24 Oven 25 Iran

Thanks for all your responses to the 28th ASLEF crossword in the August edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

ACROSS

- 1 Avoid a collision (5,5)
- 6 Come to a halt (4)
- 10 Possibly the wealthiest country in the world (7)
- 11 Famous racecourse (7)
- 12 Unofficial ballot (5,4)
- 13 Boredom, lack of interest (5)
- 14 Damp or very wet conditions (5)
- 15 Gent hailing from Paris, perhaps (9)
- 17 Someone who fervently supports his own country (9)
- 20 One who always makes an effort (5)
- 21 Baptised (5)
- 23 Armaments, weapons etc. (9)
- 25 Taking an extreme view (7)
- 26 Ray —, snooker star (7)
- 27 Bargains offered in Cheshire town? (4)
- 28 Town in Shropshire (10)

DOWN

- 1 Signals passed at danger - initially (5)
- 2 Garden plant, also known as Scarlet Pimpernel (9)

- 3 Arched construction built over a valley etc. (7,7)
- 4 Begin, start the dance (4,3)
- 5 Clear of blame (7)
- 7 Sharp projection on a rose stem (5)
- 8 Retired person (9)
- 9 Locomotive travelling between London and Glasgow for example (9,5)
- 14 London station (2,7)
- 16 Goods purchased from a catalogue (4,5)
- 18 Drinking glass (7)
- 19 Placed in the middle (7)
- 22 Awarded for gallantry or long service (5)
- 24 Golfer from Fiji – Vijay — (5)



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